



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

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Small Business Owners Given Opportunity to Comment about Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement

MINNEAPOLIS--Small business owners with concerns about excessive enforcement of federal rules can voice their complaints during a U.S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Fairness Board hearing in Rochester, Minn. The hearing will take place Thursday, June 10, 9:30 a.m., to noon at the Rochester Community and Technical College, Heintz Center, Rooms 114 and 116, 1926 College View Road SE.

Testimony from local business owners will be heard by SBA's Senior Advisor to the National Ombudsman, Peter Sorum, who is a native of Rochester. The forum is an opportunity for small business owners, community leaders and representatives of trade associations to discuss their concerns about federal compliance practices in the area designated as SBA's Region V. In addition to Minnesota, other states included in the region are Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio.

SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera holds hearings around the country for business owners to discuss openly, without fear of retaliation, their concerns about federal regulatory compliance practices.

"We work with agencies back in Washington, D.C. to encourage a less punitive and more small-business friendly regulatory environment," Barrera said.

"One of the biggest concerns small business owners face is unfair enforcement of federal regulations. They also worry about telling their stories because they fear retaliation by federal agencies," Barrera said. "Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations, and we want to encourage federal regulators to assist business owners with compliance rather than go straight to the penalty stage."

The SBA's Minnesota Assistant District Director Mike Lyons is coordinating the Rochester hearing on Sorum's behalf and welcomes the chance for small business owners to speak out. "If anyone has been subjected to unfair or excessive regulatory enforcement by a federal agency, we want to hear your story," Lyons said.

Anyone interested in testifying at this hearing can contact Mike Lyons at (612) 370-2343, or by e-mail at michael.lyons@sba.gov. Should a small business owner or representative be unable to attend, written testimony may be sent in advance of the hearing to be included in the public record. This written testimony should be sent to michael.lyons@sba.gov or fax (612) 370-2303.

For additional information about the National Ombudsman and this hearing, visit the National Ombudsman's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's office works closely with more than 35 federal regulatory agencies to resolve complaints about excessive enforcement of federal regulations. Congress established the Office of the National Ombudsman in 1996 with the passage of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act. The act established 10 regional fairness boards, served by 50 small business owners from across the country.

Information gathered at these hearings is included in the National Ombudsman's Annual Report to Congress, along with findings and recommendations about the regulatory enforcement environment and its effect on small business. Each federal regulatory agency is rated in the report based upon their responsiveness to small business comments.

The National Ombudsman's authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts or securing guaranteed loans.

For more information on the SBA's programs and services, visit the Web site at www.sba.gov.

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